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Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
Sixty-first session

Summary record (partial)* of the 1305th meeting
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 6 July 2015, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Hayashi

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chairperson** declared open the sixty-first session of the Committee.

Statement by the representative of the Secretary-General

2. **Mr. Heenan** (Human Rights Treaties Division) welcomed the members of the Committee on behalf of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Referring to the ongoing intergovernmental process on the formulation of the post-2015 sustainable development goals, he said that the goals, targets and indicators at the centre of the initiative had the potential to provide a powerful new means of addressing some of the chronic contemporary human rights situations, such as poverty and violence against women. The Committee, along with other treaty bodies, had regularly called for the new framework to be anchored in the internationally agreed human rights norms and standards. To a large extent, those calls were met by the 17 goals and 169 targets released in the zero draft of the outcome document for the United Nations Summit to adopt the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

3. In the run-up to the September 2015 summit at which the sustainable development goals would be adopted, two of the key issues for the human rights community were the framework for accountability and indicators. At their recent annual meeting, the chairpersons of the treaty bodies had urged Member States to ensure that the information gathered and acted upon by United Nations human rights mechanisms, in particular the treaty bodies, which was considered by many to be a tremendous asset, was systematically included in the follow-up and review system. At the current session, the Committee would be able to explore with UN-Women and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) how it could be involved in monitoring the indicators for sustainable development goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. The indicators that would measure progress towards the targets and goals were currently being discussed, and a preliminary list would be published in November 2015. At the current session, the Committee would be able to explore how it could feed its expertise into the construction of indicators, particularly around goal 5.

4. **The Chairperson** of the Committee had participated in the recent meeting of treaty body chairpersons in Costa Rica, at which a number of issues from the outcome of the treaty body strengthening process had been discussed. The chairpersons had also met with various regional stakeholders, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The chairpersons had endorsed a set of guidelines to prevent intimidation or reprisals against individuals or groups for engaging with the human rights treaty bodies, agreed an aligned process for consultations on and elaboration of general comments and general recommendations and issued a statement on human rights in the sustainable development goals process.

5. Turning to developments across the United Nations system since the Committee's previous session, he said that in June 2015 the Secretary-General had received the report of the High-level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, which contained key recommendations on women, peace and security, calling for gender-sensitive analysis, planning, implementation, review and evaluation processes; the integration of gender expertise within all mission components; and improving the policy and substantive and technical support to missions from United Nations entities, including UN-Women.

6. On 19 June 2015, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 69/293, declaring 19 June as the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict with a view to raising awareness of the need to end conflict-related sexual violence and urging the international community to stand in solidarity with the survivors of sexual violence around the world. Also on 19 June, the Human Rights Council had held its first annual full-day discussion on women's rights, with panels on efforts to address the diverse forms of violence against women in the private sphere and women's rights to political and economic participation. The Council had subsequently adopted a resolution on "Accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: eliminating domestic violence". Earlier in June, the Council had held a panel discussion on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, in which Committee member Ms. Bailey had participated. The summary of the outcome of the discussion might usefully feed into the Committee's deliberations on a general recommendation on the right to education. Also in June, the outgoing Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Ms. Manjoo, had presented her final report to the Council, calling for a United Nations binding international instrument on violence against women and girls, with its own dedicated monitoring body. The Council had also adopted a resolution on "Strengthening efforts to prevent and eliminate child, early and forced marriage", which included a reference to the joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices. Other relevant resolutions included those on protection of the family and elimination of discrimination against women, on which there had been a high level of disagreement among Member States.

7. On behalf of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, he congratulated Ms. Acar, who in May had been elected as a founding member of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and former Committee member Ms. Šimonović on her appointment as the new Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. Both appointments promised to open new avenues for the Committee to cooperate with those human rights mechanisms.

8. **Ms. Arocha Domínguez** said that time should be set aside during the current session to discuss some of the points raised by Mr. Heenan, such as new developments in the United Nations system. With regard to the meeting of the treaty body chairpersons, in her view it would be preferable to discuss the Committee's input for such meetings in plenary rather than electronically in order to be more inclusive and democratic and ensure that the views of the entire Committee were properly reflected. It was important that the Committee had the opportunity to share its input before outcome documents had been finalized.

9. **Ms. Schulz**, referring to the development of human rights indicators and statistics, said that States might not have the capacity to deal with new obligations in that area. It was therefore important to build as far as possible on existing sources of national data and use them to develop statistics for the areas required.

10. **Mr. Heenan** agreed that there was little point in adopting indicators for which it would not be possible to gather reliable comparable information and that it was important not to overburden States. However, from the perspective of the human rights community, many chronic human rights challenges could only be addressed through statistical analysis. Building statistical capacity at the national level must therefore be part of the sustainable development goals process. The human rights mechanisms, particularly the treaty bodies, had an important role to play as sources of information on indicators, as they had solid legal expertise and collected universal, comparable data over time.

11. **Ms. Pomeranzi** said that the potential of the sustainable development goals in the Committee's dialogues with States parties was clear. The important role to be played by the treaty bodies in monitoring the implementation of the post-2015 agenda needed to be recognized to a greater extent before adoption of the sustainable development goals in September 2015. In terms of indicators, there was a need to link information on development with human rights in the United Nations system.

12. **Ms. Acosta Vargas** said that there was a risk of focusing excessively on indicators rather than accountability and the underlying causes of the human rights violations, such as discrimination and violence against women, which could only be understood by means of in-depth analysis.

Adoption of the agenda and organization of work (CEDAW/C/61/1)

13. **The Chairperson** said that, if she saw no objection, she would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the provisional agenda contained in document CEDAW/C/61/1.

14. *The agenda was adopted.*

Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

15. **Ms. Schulz**, speaking in her capacity as Chairperson of the pre-sessional working group for the sixty-first session, said that the working group had prepared lists of issues and questions concerning the periodic reports of Bolivia, Croatia, the Gambia, Namibia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Senegal, Spain and Viet Nam. Particular attention had been paid to how those States parties had followed up on the Committee's previous concluding observations. Inputs had also been provided to the working group, in writing and in person, by representatives of United Nations entities and specialized agencies, as well as by NGOs. The finalized lists of issues and questions had been transmitted to the relevant States parties.

Follow-up to the consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

16. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao, speaking as rapporteur for follow-up, said that she had met, during the sixtieth session, with representatives of Tunisia and Zambia, and had obtained positive responses and useful information.

17. At the end of the session, follow-up letters detailing the outcome of assessments had been sent to the Bahamas, Bulgaria, Jordan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. First reminders on overdue follow-up reports had been sent to Comoros, Equatorial Guinea and Togo, and second reminders had been sent to Congo, Grenada and Zimbabwe.

18. The Committee had received follow-up reports from Chile, Cyprus, Kuwait, Malta, Mexico and Turkmenistan, with delays ranging from 1 to 29 months. Hungary had submitted its follow-up report on time and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had submitted its follow-up report two months ahead of the deadline. She invited Ms. Gabr, the country rapporteur for Kuwait, and Ms. Patten, the country rapporteur for Turkmenistan, to assist in the assessment of information received from those States parties, and called for volunteers to assist in the assessment of the follow-up reports received from the other States parties.

19. During its current session, the Committee would send a first reminder to Pakistan, second reminders to Guyana, Indonesia, Jamaica and Samoa, and a reminder

on the submission of additional information to Lesotho. In addition, meetings should be scheduled with representatives of Burkina Faso, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Oman and Uganda.

Report of the Chair on activities undertaken between the sixtieth and sixty-first sessions of the Committee

20. **The Chairperson** said that South Sudan had acceded to the Convention and the Optional Protocol, bringing the total number of States parties to those instruments to 189 and 106, respectively. The number of States parties that had accepted the amendment to article 20, paragraph 1, of the Convention remained at 69. Six States parties had submitted their periodic reports since the beginning of the last session, namely Bhutan, Canada, El Salvador, Jordan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. In addition, three States parties, Armenia, Bangladesh and Mali, had resubmitted reports that had been returned to them because they had exceeded the word limit. Four States parties had requested to submit their periodic reports under the simplified reporting procedure.

21. On 6 March, she had participated in the High-Level Thematic Debate on Advancing Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls for a Transformative Post-2015 Development Agenda, hosted by the President of the General Assembly in New York; she had made a presentation on education for girls. On 9 March, she had participated in the opening of the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, in her capacity as Chairperson of the Committee; she had delivered a statement emphasizing the importance of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a legal framework for the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action and of the post-2015 development agenda.

22. From 15 to 17 March, she and Ms. Haidar had taken part in the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, in Sendai, Japan, where they had gathered insights for a future draft general recommendation on gender equality in the context of disaster risk reduction and climate change. On 19 March, they had both also taken part in a panel on the role of the Convention and the recent activities of the Committee, organized by the Gender Equality Office of the Government of Japan, in Tokyo.

23. On 28 May, she had spoken at the First Global Conference of Young Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Tokyo, with regard to the role of parliamentarians in eliminating violence against women.

24. From 22 to 26 June, she had participated in the twenty-seventh annual meeting of chairpersons of the human rights treaty bodies, held in San José, Costa Rica.

25. She said that Ms. Bailey, who was absent from the current meeting, had participated, on 15 April, in the Day of General Discussion on the right to education for persons with disabilities, organized by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and, on 15 June, in the panel discussion on realizing the equal enjoyment of the right to education by every girl, convened by the Human Rights Council during its twenty-ninth session. She had spoken at another Council event on attacks against girls seeking access to education, on 17 June.

26. In addition, the former Committee member Ms. Violeta Neubauer had prepared a statement on the joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices, for a Council side event organized by the Permanent Missions of Belgium, Ethiopia and Viet Nam; in her absence due to illness, Mr. Schneider (Committee secretary) had presented her statement.

27. She invited the members to brief the Committee on their intersessional work activities.

28. **Ms. Haidar** said that, during her mission to Japan in the company of the Chairperson, she had also participated in a meeting with a national network of women's non-governmental organizations on the matter of labour rights, held in Osaka. From 23 to 25 June, she had made a presentation to the master's programme of the Summer School on Human Rights of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, held in the Russian Federation, on the matter of the link between the Convention and the economic, social and cultural rights of women.

29. **Ms. Gbedemah** said that she had made a presentation, on the Committee's behalf, to the fifty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW59), held at United Nations Headquarters in York in March. In addition, on 19 March, as part of a side event organized by the Government of Austria and the International Alliance of Women, she had given the Committee's perspective on women, peace and conflict, and had taken the opportunity to introduce general recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. She had later made a similar presentation at Georgetown University, where she had formerly taught.

30. **Ms. Halperin-Kaddari** said she had given a presentation on the role of the Committee in advancing women's rights to an international conference of Jewish lawyers and jurists. She had also completed an article, in collaboration with Professor Marsha Freeman, about the backlash against the Convention by men's organizations; she hoped that it would soon be published. The Ruth and Emanuel Rackman International Centre for the Advancement of the Status of Women, at Bar-Ilan University, in Israel, of which she was the director, had been working on narrowing the reservations that the Government of Israel had entered to the Convention.

31. **Ms. Pimental** said she wished to share two important events in her life. First, she had succeeded in placing on the curriculum of the Faculty of Law of the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo a course on gender rights and equality – the first of its kind in Brazil. Second, she had participated in drafting guidelines on sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination within the Faculty of Law, including discrimination based on gender, class, and national origin.

32. **Ms. Arocha Dominguez** said she had recently taken part in a four-day mission to Ecuador, at the invitation of the United Nations Women in Ecuador programme, the Ecuador Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Government of Ecuador, in which she had presented and explained the Committee's general recommendations to representatives from the Ministries and at working sessions with the National Assembly, the judiciary, and governmental as well as non-governmental bodies.

33. **Ms. Zou** Xiaoqiao said she had given a lecture to teachers and graduate students of the China University of Political Science and Law about the Convention and civil society participation in the work of the treaty bodies.

34. **Ms. Schulz** said she had participated in a seminar at the Graduate Institute in Geneva, entitled Rights and Wrongs, Gender and the International Organizations; she had spoken about the international human rights framework and the implementation of the Convention. She had also given a presentation on implementing the Convention at the national and local levels, for the humanitarian law and human rights certificate programme of the Geneva Faculty of Law. She had taken part in two events organized by Terre des Femmes Suisses and the Graduate Institute, the first a meeting with Irene Santiago, a famous feminist activist, who had discussed the role of women in recovering from conflict situations, the second a panel discussion on reassessing

women's role in preventing violence in conflict, post-conflict and non-conflict settings.

35. **Ms. Patten** said that in May she had attended a meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York regarding the 2015 High-level Review and Global Study on the implementation of Security Council resolution No. 1325 (2000). She noted that, in that context, the Convention was viewed as a critical tool in the promotion of the women, peace and security agenda.

36. She had also provided training to legislators in Cambodia, as well as to the interministerial working group that would be drafting the Cambodian Government's next report to the Committee.

37. **Ms. Gabr** said that she had written an article in French on violence against women, for the *Revue Femme Méditerranéenne*, following her participation in the Second World Human Rights Forum held in Marrakesh. She had also served as a member of the board on a joint project of the Cairo Regional Centre for Training on Conflict Resolution and Peacekeeping in Africa and the Crisis Management Centre of Finland related to the implementation of Security Council resolution No. 1325 (2000).

38. **Ms. Chalal** said that she wished simply to report that the Algerian national human rights commission and the Ministry of Education had launched a programme for disseminating the Convention in schools.

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.05 a.m.